DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 339 RC 015 092

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TITLE Principal Turnover by Kansas Rural School Administrators from 1978-1984.
SPONS AGENCY Kansas State Univ., Manhattan. Center for Rural Education and Small Schools.
PUB DATE Oct 84
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Rural and Small School Conference (6th, Manhattan, KS, October 29-30, 1984). For related document, see RC 015 091.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Longitudinal Studies; *Principals; *Rural Schools; Small Schools; *Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Kansas

ABSTRACT

Data from Kansas' 265 rural school districts from 1978-1979 through 1983-1984 revealed that there were 928 principal turnovers during that period. There were 931 possible principalships: 286 high school principals and 36 assistant principals; 72 middle school principals; and 537 elementary school principals. Total principal changes reached a high in 1979-1980 when there were 189 changes; a low of 108 was recorded for 1982-1983. Average turnover within groups ranged from 5.82 changes per year for high school assistant principals to 78.83 changes for elementary school principals. Change as a percent of total change ranged from 15% for elementary school principals to 20% for high school principals. Many districts experienced no change in at least one principal category, while overall they experienced a large amount of change, especially from 1981-1984. Several conditions may influence position change in rural school systems--the economy, decreasing enrollments, and school closings. Since many small school superintendents act as high school or elementary principals, or both, a change in a superintendency might be recorded as two principal changes. The significant amount of turnovers among rural school principals raises questions that suggest areas of research that could positively affect principal training and educational administration in general. (BRR)

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ED252339

Principal Turnover by Kansas Rural School Administrators from 1978-1984

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Funding for this study was provided by the Kansas State University Center for Rural Education and Small Schools.

Special thanks to J. Horn, G.K. Stewart and D. Honeyman for their assistance in this study.

Paper presented at the Annual Rural and Small School Conference (6th, Manhattan, KS, October 29-30, 1984).

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The state of Kansas is typical of the rural United States. The state's two and one-half million people populate 81,000 square miles making it the eighteenth least populated state with the thirteenth largest land area. The low population compared with the large total land area result in Kansas being one of the more sparsely populated of the fifty states.

Kansas has three cities with over 100,000 residents and these three cities' populations constitute over one-third of the states total population. The remaining two-thirds are diffused throughout the smaller towns and countryside that make up rural Kansas. The population density of Kansas less these three metropolitan areas is just nineteen persons per square mile while most of the western half of Kansas' 105 counties maintain population densities of less than ten persons per square mile.

Kansas' diffusive population expresses many characteristics that are prevalent in rural areas. Typical of these characteristics is the isolation of many rural areas. As population densities decrease, the distance between towns also decreases causing isolation of rural communities. Citizens of rural areas lack access to the conveniences of larger areas. Often long drives limit the accessability of commercial and business facilities that urban dwellers take for granted.

Distance between towns and low population densities are the cause of another characteristic of rural areas---the large geographic area served by the rural school. In Kansas, 386,387 students were enrolled

in 305 school districts during the 1983-84 school year. One can apply these figures to rural areas by subtracting the enrollments of the ten counties with the highest enrollments. Doing this leaves a total enrollment of 167,088 for the remaining 252 public school districts.

Rural Turnover

This study was undertaken to determine the amount of turnover by rural Kansas principals. The study represents data compiled for the six school years 1978-79 through 1983-84. Only districts maintaining K-12 operations were studied.

Districts were chosen based upon total number of students attending elementary school. The stipulation for inclusion was a total elementary enrollment of less than 1,000 students. Two hundred sixty-five of a possible 305 districts, ranging in size from 2,000 students to less than ninety were included in the study.

Turnover was recorded using information provided from the Kansas Department of Education. Positions included in the study were high school principal, high school assistant principal, middle school principal and elementary principal. High school assistant principal was the smallest category with thirty-six followed by middle school principal with seventy-two. Largest category totals were elementary principal with 537 and high school principal with 286.

No turnover was recorded for 1977-78, the base year for the study, so the data covers six school years ending with 1983-84. Recorded position turnover included changes that occured within the district, for instance, high school principals promoted to superintendent or an assistant principal assuming the principalship.

The data will be displayed and examined in four ways: Number of principal changes by year; Total district principal changes over six years; Number of districts with principal changes by category over six years; Principal changes in districts during the four year period 1981-84 and the three year period 1978-80.

Table I

Number of Administrator Changes by Year

Year	High School Principal	High School Assistant Principal	Middle School Principal	Elementary School	Total
Total Possible	286	36	72	537	
1977-78	---	---	---	---	
1978-79	59	3	13	77	152
1979-80	80	5	17	87	189
1980-81	60	10	11	93	174
1981-82	56	4	11	76	147
1982-83	34	10	10	54	108
1983-84	55	3	14	86	158
Total	344	35	76	473	
Average	57.33	5.82	12.66	78.83	
Overall Change as a Percent of Total	20%	16%	18%	15%	

Total principal changes reached a high in 1979-80, led by high change years for high school principals and middle school principals. The year 1980-81 showed the beginning of a downward trend in total change but was the

high year for assistant high school principal and elementary principal. All categories then show a downward trend, the exception being high school assistant principal which peaked again in 1982-83. The downward trend for high school principal, middle school principal and elementary principal ends in the final year of the study when all categories show an increase in position changes.

Several notable conditions may influence position change in rural school systems. The economy, obviously, affects the entire job market, including the market for principals. Another condition influencing change is decreasing enrollments and school closings.

A survey covering the period 1971-81 revealed that the number of public school attendence centers in Kansas decreased more than the national average of 4.1% and enrollments dropped 18.6%. More importantly, the pattern of school closings from 1977-84 was similar to the number of changes by principals for the same period. A total of 89 schools were closed from 1977 to 1984. The years with the most school closings were always within one year of the years with the most principal position change. For example, the summer between the school years 1978-79 and 1979-80 marked the most high school closings and the school year 1979-80 showed the most high school principal position change.

Another factor that might influence principal turnover is the phenomena of superintendents acting as principals. Many small school superintendents serve as high school or elementary principals and some small district superintendents serve as both. It is possible then that a superintendent position change might also be recorded as one or even two principal position changes.

Examining the number of Kansas districts with principal changes by category reveals some interesting data.

Table II

Number of Kansas Districts with Administrator Changes by Administrator Category over a Six Year Period of Time (1977-1984)

Number of Changes	High School Principal	High School Assistant Principal	Middle Principal	Elementary Principal
0	91	11	26	233
1	96	15	25	181
2	60	7	14	89
3	33	2	7	31
4	5	1	0	3
5	1	0	0	0

A categorical inspection of the data discloses that many districts experienced no change in at least one principal category. Ninety-one districts maintained the same high school principal, eleven the same assistant high school principal, 26 the same middle school principal and 233 were unchanged at the position of elementary principal.

No change was the largest category for middle school and elementary school principals but it was second to districts reporting one change at the position of high school principal and assistant principal. A clear majority of districts were fairly stable, either reporting one or no change in at least one principal position. One hundred eighty-seven (65%) high school principalships, 36 (78%) high school assistant principalships, 51 (70%) middle school principalships, and 414 (77%) elementary school principalships underwent one or no change from 1977-78 to 1983-84.

The information above leads to the conclusion that most districts undergo little change at the position of principal. This is not entirely true as a significant minority of the districts revealed a great deal of change. Thirty-nine districts changed high school principals at least every other year and one district reported five changes in a possible six years. Thirty-four elementary principalships underwent change at least every other year while three high school assistant principalships and seven middle school principalships fall into the same category.

Table III categorically represents the number of different principals employed from the years 1981-84.

Table III

*Administrator Changes in Districts

During the Four Year Period 1981-84

Frequency of Number of Administration Changes	High School Principal	High School Assistant Principal	Middle Principal	Elementary Principal	Total
4 of 4 years	0	0	0	1	1
3 of 4 years	19	1	2	16	38
3 of 3 years	4	0	1	6	11
2 of 3 years	26	7	4	39	76
2 of 2 years	36	2	12	63	113

*Number of different administrators in the year 1981-84. Not the number of changes.

Many districts had a large amount of change from 1981-84. While only one principalship changed four of the last four years, 43 reported

change for three of the last four years. Four high school principal positions, one middle school principal position and six elementary principal positions have changed every year for the last three years.

The rate of change is even higher for two of the last two years. Thirty-six high school principalships, two high school assistant principalships, twelve middle school principalships, and 63 elementary principalships ahve undergone change in both of the last two years. These numbers represent 14% of the high school principalships, 17% of the middle school principalships and 10% of the elementary school principalships.

Table IV

Administrator Changes in Districts

During the Four Year Period 1978-80

Frequency of Number of Administrative Changes	High School Principal	High School Assistant Principal	Middle Principal	Elementary Principal	Total
3 of 3 years	4	0	0	3	7
2 of 3 years	22	2	7	20	51
2 of 2 years	15	1	3	11	30

Some categories from Table III and IV compare favorably. The frequency of change for three of the last three years and two of the last three years was nearly the same for high school principals and middle school principals. Several major differences do surface when comparing change for 1978-81 and 1981-84. Most notable of these differences is that the number of elementary principals changing positions

increased drastically from 1978-81 to 1981-84. Sixty-three elementary principals changed positions every year from 1982-84 while only eleven changed every year from 1979-81. A similar difference exists for high school principals change during two of two years. Thirty-six high school principals changed two of the last two years from 1981-84 while only fifteen changed at this rate from 1978-81.

This study lends evidence to the contention that there is significant amount of turnover among public school principals but it brings many new questions to light: Why do principals change so frequently? Do principals stay in the field of education when they change positions? What conditions affect principal turnover? Why do some districts maintain stable principalships while others change frequently?

These questions suggest many areas of research that could positively affect principal training and the field of educational administration in general.

Appendix A

Kansas School Districts by Name Included in the Study

Abilene USD 435
Alma USD 329
Altoona-Midway USD 387
Andover USD 385
Anthony-Harper USD 361
Argonia Public Schools USD 359
Ashland USD 220
Atchinson County Community USD 377
Atchinson Public Schools USD 409
Attica USD 511
Atwood USD 318
Augusta USD 402
Axtell USD 488
B & B USD 451
Baldwin City USD 348
Barber County North USD 254
Barnes USD 233
Basehor-Linwood USD 458
Baxter Springs SDU 508
Bazine USD 304
Belleville USD 427
Beloit USD 273
Blue Valley USD 384
Brewster USD 314
Brown County USD 430
Bucklin USD 459
Burlingame Public Schools USD 454
Burlington USD 244
Burrton USD 369
Caldwell USD 360
Caney Valley USD 436
Canton-Galva USD 419
Cedar Vale USD 285
Central USD 462
Central Heights USD 288
Centre USD 397
Chapman USD 473
Chase USD 401
Chase County USD 284
Chautauqua County USD 286
Cheney USD 268
Cherokee USD 247
Cherryvale USD 477
Chetopa USD 505
Cheylin USD 103
Cimarron-Ensign USD 102
Circle USD 375
Claflin USD 354

Clearwater USD 264
Colby USD 315
Columbus USD 493
Comanche County USD 300
Concordia USD 333
Conway Springs USD 356
Copeland USD 476
Council Grove USD 417
Crest USD 479
Cuba USD 455
Cunningham USD 332
Deerfield USD 216
DeSoto USD 232
Dexter USD 471
Dighton USD 482
Douglass Public Schools USD 396
Eastern Heights USD 324
Easton USD 449
Elk Valley USD 283
Elkhart USD 218
Ell-Saline USD 307
Ellinwood USD 355
Ellis USD 388
Ellsworth USD 327
Elwood USD 486
Erie-St. Paul USD 101
Eudora USD 491
Eureka USD 389
Fairfield USD 310
Flinthills USD 492
Ft. Larned USD 495
Fort Scott USD 234
Fowler USD 225
Fredonia USD 484
Frontenac USD 249
Galena USD 499
Garnett USD 365
Girard USD 248
Goddard USD 265
Goessel USD 411
Golden Plains USD 316
Goodland USD 352
Grainfield USD 292
Greeley County USD 200
Greensburg USD 422
Grinnell USD 291
Halstead USD 440
Hamilton USD 390
Hanston USD 228
Haven USD 312

Haviland USD 474
Healy USD 468
Herington USD 487
Herndon USD 317
Hesston USD 460
Hiawatha USD 415
Highland USD 425
Hill City USD 281
Hillsboro-Durham-Lehigh USD 410
Hoisington USD 431
Holcomb USD 363
Holton USD 336
Hoxie Community Schools USD 412
Hugoton USD 210
Humboldt USD 258
Ingalls USD 477
Inman USD 488
Jackson Heights USD 335
Jayhawk USD 346
Jefferson County North USD 339
Jefferson West USD 340
Jetmore USD 227
Jewell USD 279
Kaw Valley USD 321
Kingman USD 331
Kinsley-Offerle USD 347
Kismet-Plains USD 483
Labette County USD 506
LaCrosse USD 395
Lakin USD 215
Lansing USD 469
Lebanon USD 236
Lebo-Waverly USD 243
Leon USD 205
Leoti USD 467
LeRoy-Gridley USD 245
Lewis USD 502
Lincoln USD 298
Lindsborg USD 400
Little River USD 444
Logan USD 326
Lorraine USD 328
Louisburg USD 416
Lyndon USD 421
Lyons USD 405
Macksville USD 351
Madison-Virgil USD 386
Maize USD 266
Mankato USD 278
Marais Des Cygnes Valley USD 456
Marion USD 408

Marmaton Valley USD 256
Marysville USD 364
Mayetta USD 337
McLouth USD 342
McPherson USD 418
Meade USD 266
Midway USD 433
Minneola USD 219
Montezuma USD 371
Moscow USD 209
Moundridge USD 423
Mullinville USD 424
Mulvane USD 263
Nemaha Valley USD 442
Neodesha USD 461
Nes Tre La Go USD 301
Ness City USD 303
Newton 369
Nickerson USD 309
North Central USD 221
North Lyon County USD 251
North Ottawa County USD 239
Northeast USD 246
Northern Valley USD 212
Norton USD 211
Oakley USD 274
Oberlin USD 294
Onaga-Havensville-Wheaton USD 322
Osage City USD 420
Osawatomie USD 367
Osborne County USD 392
Oskaloosa USD 341
Oswego USD 504
Otis-Bison USD 403
Ottawa USD 290
Oxford USD 358
Palco USD 269
Paola USD 368
Paradise USD 399
Peabody-Burns USD 398
Perry USD 343
Phillipsburg USD 325
Pike Valley USD 426
Piper USD 203
Plainville USD 270
Pleasanton USD 344
Prairie Heights USD 295
Prairie View USD 362
Pratt USD 382
Pretty Prairie USD 311
Quinter USD 293
Remington-Whitewater USD 206
Renwick USD 267
Republican Valley USD 224

Riley County USD 378
Riverton USD 404
Rolla USD 217
Rose Hill USD 394
Rozel USD 496
Rural Vista USD 481
Russell County USD 407
Sabetha USD 441
St. Francis Schools USD 297
St. John USD 350
Santa Fe Trail USD 434
Satanta USD 507
Scott County USD 466
Sedwick Public Schools USD 439
Silver Lake USD 372
Skyline USD 438
Smith Center USD 237
Smoky Hill USD 302
Solomon USD 393
South Barber Co. USD 255
South Haven USD 509
Southeast of Saline USD 306
Southern Cloud County USD 334
Southern Lyon County USD 252
Spearville USD 381
Spring Hill USD 230
Stafford USD 349
Stanton Co. USD 452
Sterling USD 376
Stockton USD 271
Sublette USD 374
Sylvan Grove USD 299
Syracuse USD 494
Tonganoxie USD 464
Triplains USD 275
Troy USD 429
Twin Valley USD 240
Udall USD 463
Uniontown USD 235
Valley Center USD 262
Valley Falls USD 338
Valley Heights USD 498
Vermillion USD 380
Victoria USD 432
Wabaunsee EAst USD 330
Waconda USD 272
WaKeeney USD 208
Wallace County Schools USD 241
Wamego USD 320

Washington USD 222
Wathena USD 406
Wellington USD 353
Wellsville USD 289
Waskan USD 242
West Elk USD 282
West Franklin USD 287
West Graham-Moreland USD 280
West Smith County USD 238
West Solomon Valley USD 213
Westmoreland USD 323
White Rock USD 104

Appendix B

Kansas School Districts by Name Not Included in the Study

Arkansas City USD 470
Auburn-Washburn USD 437
Blue Valley USD 229
Bonner Springs USD 204
Buhler USD 313
Chanute Public Schools USD 413
Clay Center USD 379
Coffeyville USD 445
Derby USD 260
Dodge City USD 443
El Dorado USD 490
Emporia USD 253
Ft. Leavenworth USD 207
Garden City USD 457
Gardner USD 231
Great Bend USD 428
Hays USD 489
Haysville USD 261
Hutchinson USD 308
Independence USD 446
Iola USD 257
Junction City USD 475
Lawrence USD 497
Leavenworth USD 453
Liberal USD 480
Manhattan USD 383
Newton USD 373
Olathe USD 233
Pittsburg USD 250
Salina USD 305
Seaman USD 345
Shawnee Heights USD 450
Shawnee Mission USD 512
Topeka Public Schools USD 501
Turner USD 202
Ulysses USD 214
Wichita USD 259
Winfield USD 456